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ABSTRACT

Using 1985 school enrollment data for persons 3 to 34 years old, this report discusses increases and decreases in overall enrollments by race and ethnicity. Data on school completion rates are also presented. They reveal that the Hispanic population of 3- to 24-year-olds is growing at a faster rate than either Blacks or Whites, and thus becoming a larger proportion of each age cohort and of each grade level. The analysis also reveals that Hispanic 3- to 4-year-olds and 17- to 24-year-olds are proportionately less likely to be enrolled in school than either Blacks or Whites. This rapid growth of Hispanics at all school age levels will continue to place demands on an educational system which in many instances is not adequately serving Hispanic children. The need for a more appropriate education for Hispanics will continue to increase; the gap in educational attainment between Hispanic and other Americans must be eliminated. This report contains four figures in which demographic data are presented in percentages. (Author/VM)

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SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS: 1981-1985

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Perspectivas
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ISSUE BRIEF

July 1987

Title: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS: 1981-1985

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I. INTRODUCTION

Each fall, schools report the number of students they enroll. These figures are collected by state education agencies and then reported to the U.S. Department of Education. The statistics are then compiled and reported by the Census Bureau. The most recent complete data available report school enrollments for persons 3 to 34 years old for the fall of 1985.

This analysis of Census data discusses increases and decreases in overall enrollments, enrollments by race and ethinicity, and school completion rates. It reveals that the Hispanic population of 3 to 24 year-olds is growing at a faster rate than either Blacks or Whites, and thus becoming a larger proportion of each age cohort and of each grade level. This analysis also reveals that Hispanic 3 to 4 year-olds and 17 to 24 year-olds -- those not legally required to be in school -- are proportionately less likely to be enrolled in schools than either Blacks or Whites.

II. METHODOLOGY

Precautions must be taken when interpreting Census data, especially when dealing with data for "Spanish Origin" categories. This designation includes individuals who may also be included in the White or Black racial categories since "Spanish Origin" is not considered a race. According to the Census, 55.0% of "Spanish Origin" individuals are included in the "White" category, so it is necessary to subtract 55.0% of "Spanish Origin" from the "White" statistic to obtain an approximate count of White non-Hispanics. Because of errors in the survey -- such as incorrect self-identification -- percentages will normally approximate, but not equal, 100%.

This update reports the changes in enrollments between 1981 and 1985 for persons 3 to 24 years of age in nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school, high school and college. Generalizations about age groups have been constructed to approximate grade levels (elementary, high school, etc.). Thus, the age cohorts used are, 3-4, 5-6, 7-13, 14-19, and 20-24 year olds.

III. FINDINGS

A. General Population Trends

Between 1981 and 1985 two age cohorts in the overall population increased in size -- the 3-4 and 5-6 year-olds -- and three age groups decreased in size -- 7-13, 14-19 and 20-24. Both 3-4 and 5-6 year-olds increased by 10.0%. The 7-13 year-old population decreased by 4.9%, 14-19 year-olds by 6.1% and 20-24 year-olds by 4.5% (See Fugure 1).

With only one exception, Hispanics were the fastest growing population in every age group. While the overall population increase for children 3-4 years old

FIGURE 1

Changes In School-Age Populations By Age Cohort
1981-1985

Population of 3-4 Year Olds

	As % of Pop.	1981	As % of Pop.	1985	% Change
Total		6,476		7,192	11.1
White	76.0	4,922	75.1	5,402	9.8
Black	15.0	972	15.3	1,100	13.2
Spanish	10.4	672	11.0	789	17.4

Population of 5-6 Year Olds

	As % of Pop.	1981	As % of Pop.	1985	% Change
Total		6,335		6,967	10.0
White	76.2	4,828	75.1	5,257	8.9
Black	15.1	957	15.4	1,076	12.4
Spanish	9.9	629	10.1	701	11.4

Population of 7-13 Year Olds

	As % of Pop.	1981	As % of Pop.	1985	% Change
Total		24,209		23,024	-4.9
White	77.3	18,707	75.1	17,309	-7.5
Black	14.9	3,618	15.6	3,583	-1.0
Spanish	8.7	2,109	10.2	2,346	11.2

Population of 14-19 Year Olds

	As % of Pop.	1981	As % of Pop.	1985	% Change
Total		23,385		21,969	-6.1
White	78.8	18,427	77.2	17,309	-7.9
Black	14.3	3,354	15.0	3,285	-2.1
Spanish	7.9	1,839	8.5	1,865	1.4

Population of 20-24 Year Olds

	As % of Pop.	1981	As % of Pop.	1985	% Change
Total		20,850		19,918	-4.5
White	81.0	16,897	79.3	15,801	-6.5
Black	12.7	2,650	13.3	1,144	-0.2
Spanish	6.9	1,446	8.3	1,651	14.2

SOURCES: Data for 1981, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 400
Data for 1985, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 409

was 10.0%, the White population increased by 9.8% and Blacks by 13.2%. Hispanics outpaced both with an increase of 17.4%. As a proportion of the overall 3-4 year-old population, only the White population decreased, from 76.0% in 1981 to 75.1% in 1985. Increases for Hispanics and Blacks, however, were modest. By 1985, Hispanics represented 11.0% of 3-4 year-olds, up 0.6% from 1981; Blacks represented 15.3% in 1985, up 0.3%

Growth rates for 5-6 years olds were similar. This is the one age group in which Hispanics did not outpace the other populations. The proportion of Hispanic 5-6 year-olds grew at a rapid pace -- 11.4% -- but less than the 12.4% growth rate for Black children. The White population increased by 8.9%.

The 7-13 year-old population decreased overall by 4.9%. However, changes in the composition of this age group were erratic; the number of White children decreased by 7.5%, Blacks decreased by 1.0%, and Hispanics increased by 11.2%. In 1981, Whites composed 77.3% of 7-13 year-olds; by 1985 they represented 75.1%. Blacks increased their representation from 14.9% in 1981 to 15.6% in 1985, and Hispanics increased from 8.7% to 10.2%.

Among Hispanics, the 14-19 year-old cohort had the slowest growth rate, yet Hispanics were the only group that did not experience a decrease. Overall, this population group decreased by about 6.1%: the number of Whites decreased by 7.9%, and Blacks by 2.1%; Hispanics increased by 1.4%. Again, changes in proportional representation were slight.

The 20-24 year old population decreased overall by 4.5% during the four-year period. While the numbers of both Whites and Blacks decreased, this was the second fastest growing age group for Hispanics. Hispanics in this cohort grew by 14.2%, compared to the White and Black decreases of 6.5% and 0.2%, respectively. Representation in this population by the different groups experienced only slight changes as follows: Whites decreased from 81.0% to 79.3%, Blacks increased from 12.7% to 13.3%, and Hispanics increased from 6.9% to 8.3%.

B. School Enrollments

School enrollment data measure the number of students that are attending school during the fall survey conducted by local educational agencies. School enrollment trends between 1981 and 1985 for the different groups reported were usually consistent with the general population trends; the number and proportion of Hispanics increased considerably. Overall, school enrollments decreased by 0.6% from 1981 to 1985; Whites experienced a decrease of 1.7%, Blacks an increase of 1.0%, and Hispanics an increase of 11.4% (See Figure 2).

The number of children enrolled in nursery school increased the fastest. This appears to reflect changes in lifestyle, such as increased nursery school enrollment for children of working mothers, since enrollment increases outpaced population growth. Overall nursery school enrollments grew at a rate of 21.0% over the four-year period; Black enrollments increased by 16.9%, Whites by 23.4% and Hispanics by 28.2%. Approximately 78.4% of children enrolled in nursery school in 1981 were White and that figure grew to 80.1% in 1985. Hispanics increased only 0.3%, from 6.4% to 6.7%. Only Black children composed a smaller proportion of nursery enrollments in 1985 than they did in 1981, declining by 0.5% from 13.8% to 13.3%.

Kindergarten enrollments also rose sharply between 1981 and 1985, growing by 20.7%. Again, enrollment increases were greater than population growth. The

FIGURE 2

School Enrollment By Educational Level
1981-1985

Total School Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	
	Percentage		Percentage	Percentage Change
Total		58,390		58,014	-0.6
White	78.2	45,666	77.4	44,884	-1.7
Black	14.3	8,350	14.3	8,444	1.0
Spanish	7.8	4,551	8.7	5,070	11.4

Nursery School Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	
	Percentage		Percentage	Percentage Change
Total		2,058		2,491	21.0
White	78.4	1,613	80.1	1,995	23.7
Black	13.8	284	13.3	332	16.9
Spanish	6.4	131	6.7	168	28.2

Kindergarten School Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	
	Percentage		Percentage	Percentage Change
Total		3,161		3,815	20.7
White	76.8	2,429	75.0	2,860	17.7
Black	15.0	474	16.4	625	31.9
Spanish	9.7	306	9.5	364	19.0

Elementary School Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	
	Percentage		Percentage	Percentage Change
Total		27,795		26,866	-3.3
White	76.6	21,302	74.6	20,051	-5.9
Black	15.4	4,291	16.0	4,307	0.4
Spanish	8.9	2,474	10.4	2,803	13.3

High School Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	
	Percentage		Percentage	Percentage Change
Total		14,642		13,979	4.5
White	78.1	11,440	76.8	10,742	-6.1
Black	14.8	2,168	15.2	2,131	1.7
Spanish	7.7	1,130	8.3	1,156	2.3

FIGURE 2 (Continued)

Total College Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	Percentage Change
	Percentage	Percentage		
Total		10,734	10,863	1.2
White	82.7	8,881	83.0	9,016	1.5
Black	10.4	1,133	9.7	1,049	-7.4
Spanish	4.8	510	5.3	579	13.5

Full-time College Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	Percentage Change
	Percentage	Percentage		
Total		7,569	7,720	2.0
White	82.7	6,263	82.7	6,387	2.0
Black	10.8	815	9.9	767	5.9
Spanish	4.5	343	4.9	381	11.1

Part-time College Enrollment of Persons 3-34 Years Old

	1981		1985	Percentage Change
	Percentage	Percentage		
Total		3,165	3,143	-0.7
White	82.7	2,618	83.6	2,628	0.9
Black	10.0	518	9.0	282	-11.3
Spanish	6.2	167	6.3	198	18.6

SOURCE: Data for 1981, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 400
Data for 1985, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 409

Black enrollment rate outpaced both Whites and Hispanics. Black enrollments were up 31.9%, Hispanic enrollments 19.0% and Whites 17.7%. At the same time, the proportion of White and Hispanic children in the kindergarten cohort decreased. For Whites, the decrease was from 76.8% to 75.0%, for Hispanics 9.7% to 9.5%. Blacks increased from 15.0% to 16.4%.

Changes in elementary school enrollment varied by population group. Overall enrollments for this population dropped by 3.3%. Whites decreased by 5.9%, and Blacks by 0.4%, while Hispanic enrollment grew by 13.3%. In 1981, 8.9% of children enrolled in elementary schools were Hispanic; by 1985 that figure had risen to 10.4%. Blacks also gained, increasing from 15.0% to 16.4%. By contrast, Whites decreased from 76.8% to 75.0% of elementary school enrollment.

Hispanics experienced the smallest changes in high school enrollments. While overall enrollments were down by 4.5%, most of that was a result of a 6.1% drop in White enrollment. Both Black and Hispanic enrollments were up slightly, with increases of 1.7% and 2.3% respectively. Since the Hispanic high school-age population increased by only 1.4%, this suggests that enrollment changes represented an increase in the percentage of Hispanics who were enrolled in school.

Overall college enrollments (enrollment in a program that leads to a B.A, M.A. or other recognized college degree) were up by only 1.2% in the four-year period. White enrollments were up 1.5%; in contrast, Black enrollment dropped 7.4%, while Hispanic enrollment increased by 13.5%. In 1981, 82.7% of those enrolled in college were White; by 1985 that figure had increased to 83.0%. Blacks decreased their proportion of college enrollment from 10.8% to 9.7%. Hispanics experienced moderate gains, from 4.8% to 5.3%. Given the large Hispanic population growth in this age group, it appears that Hispanics actually lost ground in terms of their likelihood of enrolling in college.

Increases in full-time college enrollments were modest. In the four-year period, full-time college enrollment grew by 2.0%. That was the same growth rate experienced by the White college population. Blacks grew at a rate of 5.9%, and Hispanics twice as fast by 11.9%. However, despite numerical increases, proportions were almost static. Whites continued to make up 82.7% of all full-time students in 1985, Blacks were down from 10.8% to 9.9%, and Hispanics increased from 4.5% to 4.9%.

Changes in part-time college enrollments were large for both Blacks and Hispanics. During the four-year period, the number of Black students enrolled in part-time college programs decreased by 11.3%, while the number of Hispanics enrolled increased by 20.0%. White student enrollments changed very little in the four-year period, with a growth of 0.9%. In 1981, 82.7% of part-time college students were White; by 1985 that figure was 83.6%. Blacks decreased from 10.0% of this population in 1981 to 9.0% in 1985, and Hispanics increased slightly from 6.2% to 6.3%.

C. Enrollment Status

While all the major groups reported were enrolled at almost identical rates in grade levels kindergarten through junior high school, differences at other levels -- nursery school, high school and college -- were considerable. The Census reports enrollment rates by age groups and not by grade levels; thus, direct correlations between age groups as reported by the Census and grade levels

some may be in first grade. Without knowing the exact age distribution of that group, it is impossible to establish the precise number of children in that cohort that belong in a particular grade. Hence, it is necessary to assign age groups to their most likely grades, by saying that most children between the ages of 5 and 13 are in kindergarten through junior high school. Likewise, it is expected that children between the ages of 3-4 are enrolled in nursery schools, and that most 14-19 year olds make up the high school population. One serious problem with the last group is that most students actually graduate from high school at 18, but the Census does not report the number of 18 year-olds, only the number of 18-19 year-olds (See Figure 3).

The enrollment rates for nursery school age children -- 3-4 years-old -- are lower than for other grade levels, not surprising since such enrollment is not a legal requirement, and most nursery schools require payments from parents. In 1981, 36.0% of all 3-4 year-olds were enrolled in school; by 1985 that figure was up to 38.9%. Black children are the most likely to be enrolled in nursery school. In 1985, 42.7% of Black children ages 3-4 were enrolled in nursery school, up from 36.7% of 1981. The proportion of Whites enrolled in such programs increased from 35.6% to 38.6%. Hispanics continued to be the most "under-enrolled" population, with 27.0% enrolled, up from 24.5% in 1981.

The percentage of persons 14-19 enrolled in school increased from about 78.5% in 1981 to 80.5% in 1985. White enrollment figures for this age group were almost identical to the overall enrollment rates, 78.2% in 1981 and 80.9% 1985. Black enrollments decreased slightly from 78.6% to 78.3%. The percentage of Hispanics enrolled increased from 71.7% to 75.4.

Of all persons 18-24 years of age, 26.2% were enrolled in college in 1981, and 27.8% in 1985. Black enrollment decreased from 19.9% to 19.8%. Hispanic enrollments increased from 16.7% to 17.0%. White enrollment continued to be higher, up from 26.7% in 1981 to 28.7% in 1985.

D. Students Not Enrolled in School, Not High School Graduates

The proportion of students 14-24 years old not enrolled in school and not high school graduates is consistently high for Hispanics. While these rates generally declined during the four-year period, in some instances they remained twice as high as for the other populations. For example, in 1981, of all persons 14-15 years old, just 2.0% were not enrolled in school and were not high school graduates; in 1985, that percentage was down to 1.8%. Of Whites, 1.8% were in this group both years. The percentage of Blacks in this category decreased from 2.9% in 1981 to 2.1% in 1985. The rate for Hispanics was three times as high as Whites in 1981 at 6.0%, and twice as high in 1985 at 3.6% (See Figure 4)

For persons 16-17 years of age, in 1985 7.0% did not have a high school degree and were not enrolled in school, down from 7.8% in 1981. During this period, the proportion of Whites in this population went down from 7.8% to 7.1%. In 1985, only 6.5% of Blacks were not enrolled in school and were not high school graduates down from 8.0% in 1981. However, the Hispanic rate remained twice as high. In 1981, 15.8% were not enrolled in school and were not high school graduates; by 1985 the percentage had dropped to 14.5%.

The "dropout" rate for Hispanics is at least twice as high as that of Whites for the 18-19 year old cohort. The overall rate for 18-19 year-olds in 1985 was 14.3%; 13.8% for Whites, 17.3% for Blacks, and 30.6% for Hispanics. The

FIGURE 3

School Enrollments As Percent of Total Population
By age Group
1981-1985

Percentage of Persons 3-4 Years Old Enrolled in School

	1981	1985
Total	36.0	38.9
White	35.6	38.6
Black	36.7	42.7
Spanish	24.5	27.0

Percentage of Persons 5-6 Years Old Enrolled in School

	1981	1985
Total	94.0	96.1
White	93.9	96.4
Black	94.5	95.7
Spanish	90.4	94.5

Percentage of Persons 7-13 Years Old Enrolled in School

	1981	1985
Total	99.2	99.2
White	99.3	99.3
Black	99.2	99.1
Spanish	99.2	99.0

Percentage of Persons 14-19 Years Old Enrolled in School

	1981	1985
Total	78.5	80.5
White	78.2	80.9
Black	78.6	78.3
Spanish	71.7	75.4

Percentage of Persons 20-24 Years Old Enrolled in School

	1981	1985
Total	22.5	24.0
White	20.8	24.3
Black	18.3	19.5
Spanish	16.0	15.9

SOURCES: Data for 1981, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 400
Data for 1985, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 409

FIGURE 4

Persons Not Enrolled in School, Not High School Graduates (NEIS-NHSG)
By Race, Ethnicity and Age Group
1981-1985

Percentage of Persons 14-15 Years Old NEIS-NHSG

	1981	1985
Total	2.0	1.8
White	1.8	1.8
Black	2.9	2.1
Spanish	6.0	3.6

Percentage of Persons 16-17 Years Old NEIS-NHSG

	1981	1985
Total	7.8	7.0
White	7.8	7.1
Black	8.0	6.5
Spanish	15.8	14.5

Percentage of Persons 18-19 Years Old NEIS-NHSG

	1981	1985
Total	16.0	14.3
White	15.5	13.8
Black	19.3	17.3
Spanish	36.4	42.2

Percentage of Persons 20-24 Years Old NEIS-NHSG

	1981	1985
Total	15.4	14.0
White	14.3	13.4
Black	22.8	17.7
Spanish	39.4	31.8

Percentage of Persons Enrolled in College 18-24 Years Old

	1981	1985
Total	26.2	27.8
White	26.7	28.7
Black	19.9	19.8
Spanish	16.7	17.0

SOURCES: Data for 1981, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 400
Data for 1985, Current Population Survey, Series P-20, Number 409

White and Black rates represent small decreases from 1981. However, while in 1985 the Hispanic dropout rate was 6.4% less than in 1981, it was still more than twice the White figure. The same was true for persons 20-24. While just 14% of all 20-24 year-olds were dropouts, the rate was 17.7% for Blacks, 13.4% for Whites, and 31.8% for Hispanics.

IV. Implications

The rapid growth of Hispanics at all school-age levels will continue to place demands on an educational system which in many instances is not adequately serving Hispanic children. The rapid growth rate of the youngest age group reported — 3-4 year-olds -- will assure that at each grade level, schools will enroll increasingly larger numbers of Hispanics for the next decade and a half.

While the data presented provide very limited information about the educational progress of children, several important problem areas can be identified. This is especially true for the youngest -- 3-4 year-old -- and the oldest -- 17-24 year old -- populations. At least 90% of children who should be in kindergarten through junior high school are enrolled. However, this is not true for the populations in nursery and high school, and in college.

Among the older populations, Hispanics continue to be more than twice as likely as other youth to be dropouts. Although the figures reported above are lower than those reported by other sources, they show that major efforts are needed to increase the percentage of Hispanics who earn a high school diploma. College enrollment data indicate that Hispanics tend to enroll more in part-time college study than other populations, and are also the least likely to be enrolled in college. Despite large numerical increases in enrollments over the past four years, Hispanics make up less than 6.0% of college students, while they make up at least 8.0% of the college-age population.

V. Conclusions

Several important conclusions can be derived from the data presented. While little can be said about the quality of education that children receive solely by observing school participation rates, failure in upper grades is due, at least in part, to a lack of effective early education. Hence, Hispanics suffer from inadequate programs throughout the educational pipeline. The need for the educational system to serve Hispanics effectively will increase in the future:

- Hispanics will continue to increase as a proportion of each age group and of each grade level. As the data reveal, Hispanics were the fastest growing population between 1981 and 1985. Census projections indicate that the Hispanic population is likely to double within 30 years, and it will continue to grow rapidly for the next 100 years. While the median age will gradually increase, Hispanics will also remain the youngest major subpopulation and thus will represent a growing proportion of the school-age population;

- The nation's schools are becoming increasingly minority, especially as the number of White children enrolled decreases. It has been estimated that within a decade, about one-third of the work force will be minority. The ability of the schools to provide effective education will play a major role in determining the future industrial competitiveness of this country;

- Early education programs must be improved to assure that Hispanic and other minority youth succeed in elementary school, finish high school and attend college. All available data show that Hispanics are more likely to drop out of school than other populations, and that Hispanics are the least educated major U.S. subpopulation. Hispanics' lower participation rates in early education programs may be a factor in this later school failure.

- In nursery school, high school and college, Hispanics are less likely to be enrolled than their Black or White counterparts. These are the age groups at which school enrollment may not be mandatory. Yet, Hispanic enrollment at these levels must increase if the gap in educational attainment between Hispanics and other Americans is to be eliminated.

- Hispanics have lower college attendance rates than Whites or Blacks and are less likely to be enrolled full-time. Efforts should be directed to increasing the number of Hispanics in full-time college study, and to assisting financially those who must go to college part-time due to the need to work. At present, part-time students are not eligible for financial aid.

SOURCES

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